

# Lishana Deni

**Lishana Deni** is a modern Jewish Aramaic language, often called *Neo-Aramaic* or *Judeo-Aramaic*. It was originally spoken in northern Iraq and southeastern Turkey in the lands west of the Great Zab river (Athura). Following the exodus of Jews from the Muslim lands, most speakers now live in Israel, principally Jerusalem and surrounding villages.

The name *Lishana Deni* means 'our language', and is similar to names used by other Jewish Neo-Aramaic dialects (Lishan Didan, Lishanid Noshan). Other popular names for the language are *Lishan Hozaye*, 'the language of the Jews', and *Kurdit*, 'Kurdish'. Scholarly sources tend simply to refer to Lishana Deni as *Zakho Jewish Neo-Aramaic* although it was spoken in the entire region west of the Great Zab river.

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## Origins

Various Neo-Aramaic dialects were spoken across a wide area from the Zakho region, in the west, to Lake Urmia, in the northeast to Sanandaj, in the southeast (the area covers northern Iraq and northwestern Iran). The upheavals in their traditional region after the First World War and the founding of the State of Israel led most of the Jews of Kurdistan to move to Jerusalem and villages nearby.

However, uprooted from northern Iraq, and thrown together with so many different language groups in the fledgling nation, Lishana Deni began to be replaced in the speech of younger generations by Modern Hebrew.

Fewer than 8,000 people are known to speak Lishana Deni, and all of them are over 50 years old. Lishana Deni is written in the Hebrew alphabet. Spelling tends to be highly phonetic, and elided letters are not written.

Lishana Deni	
<span>לִשְׁנָא דְּנִי</span> <i>Lišānā Denī</i> , <span>לִשְׁנָא יְהוּדִיָּא</span> <i>Lišān Hōzāyē</i>	
Pronunciation	<span>[li<span> </span>ˈʃana<span> </span>ˈdɛni]</span>
Native <span> </span> to	Israel, Iraq, Turkey
Region	Nineveh Plains, Iraq <i>i</i> Kurdistan (Iraq), Bohtan valley and Hakkari mountains (Turkey)
<div>Native speakers</div>	7,500 <span> </span> (1999) <sup>[1]</sup>
<div><span>Language family</span></div>	<div>Afro-Asiatic<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li> Semitic<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Central Semitic<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Northwest Semitic<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Aramaic<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Eastern Aramaic<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Northeastern<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Assyrian Neo-Aramaic<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>Lishana Deni</b></li></ul></li></ul></li></ul></li></ul></li></ul></li></ul></li></ul></li></ul></div>
Language codes	
<span>ISO 639-3</span>	lsd
Glottolog	lish1247 ( <span>http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/lish1247</span> ) <sup>[2]</sup>

# Intelligibility

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The language faces extinction in the next few decades. Although there is very little intelligibility between Lishana Deni and the other Jewish dialects, there is quite reasonable intelligibility between it and the Christian Neo-Aramaic dialects spoken in the region.

The Christian dialect of Chaldean Neo-Aramaic is closest to Lishana Deni, followed by the *Ashiret* dialects of Assyrian Neo-Aramaic. Like other Judaeo-Aramaic dialects, *Lishana Deni* is sometimes called Targumic, due to the long tradition of translating the Hebrew Bible into Aramaic, and the production of targumim.

## Region

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Lishana Deni was spoken in Athura (which means Assyria in NENA dialects), which is located west of the Great Zab river in northern Iraq and southeastern Turkey. Most Lishana Deni speakers are rural and were farmers and shepherds but there are urban speakers as well in cities such as Nohadra, Zakho, Amedya and more.

The regions where Lishana Deni was spoken are Bohtan, Zakho and Nineveh Plains in Upper Mesopotamia, as well as Nerwa, Sapna, Barwari and Hakkari mountains.

## See also

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- Aramaic alphabet
- Betanure Jewish Neo-Aramaic
- Jewish languages

## References

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1. Lishana Deni (<https://www.ethnologue.com/18/language/lshd/>) at *Ethnologue* (18th ed., 2015)
2. Hammarström, Harald; Forkel, Robert; Haspelmath, Martin, eds. (2017). "Lishana Deni" (<http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/lish1247>). *Glottolog* 3.0. Jena, Germany: Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History.

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## External links

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- [Kurdish jewish women life \(http://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/kurdish-women\)](http://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/kurdish-women).
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